

**Remarks of Lt. Governor Becky Skillman at the
Indiana State FFA Convention, Purdue University
June 16th, 2010**

Thank you Travis [outgoing state FFA President] and congratulations on a successful reign. I want you to know how much I have enjoyed our association this year. Indiana is proud of you and all of our retiring officers.

I'm pleased to be here for the 81st state FFA Convention. In fact I'm pleased to be back in the USA. I recently returned home from an agricultural trade mission to China. We had great results, with more sales of our Hoosier homegrown products and more investment in our state.

But traveling abroad always reminds me why I love Indiana so much. I'm glad to be home, and especially glad to have a good reason to spend time with the FFA.

I am always impressed with the high standards and professionalism of your teachers, volunteers, officers and members. You are the best of the best, and we are continually reminded of how important your organization is to our state.

Whether it's the National FFA headquarters in Indianapolis or the sea of blue jackets that flood the state for the national convention, you have a recognizable presence. You represent excellence, hard work and integrity. We have many reasons to be thankful for the work you're doing, and the future you're building for the agricultural industry.

It's my expectation and hope to see each of you excel, and with the experience of FFA, you can hardly expect anything less for yourselves. By participating in FFA locally, statewide, and on the national level you are opening tremendous doors of opportunity.

There are thousands of diverse careers in agriculture that need hard working, passionate people like you. The world is quite literally depending on the agricultural industry to thrive and grow.

That's one reason we chose to reach out to China with an agricultural trade mission. We've had a strong trade relationship with China for many years, but it needs to be stronger still to meet the growing demand for food and agricultural products. We have to be ready to meet that world-wide demand with the tools of modern agriculture.

This is a critical time for our state and for the agricultural industry, and it's important that we take every opportunity to strengthen our position. That's why I'm so proud to announce a new partnership between the Indiana State Dept of Agriculture and Indiana FFA that will allow us to move forward together.

Our state Department of Agriculture will now house FFA's Executive Director, who will continue to oversee the administration of the State FFA organization. It only makes sense for one of Indiana's premier agricultural leadership organizations to work closely

with the talent we have at ISDA. Later this summer the position will be filled and ready to serve you as you start a new school year.

This is a role that has been performed by our state Department of Education for quite some time – and the agricultural curriculum and education aspects of FFA will remain under DOE oversight. Ag teachers will continue to be connected with the Department of Education, but they will also now have a direct link to ISDA.

This partnership is a perfect fit. ISDA has a strategy for advocacy and education as well as economic development and environmental stewardship. This perfectly compliments FFA's academic and entrepreneurial work.

The SAE (Supervised Agricultural Experience) is a perfect example. As FFA members work in the field, whether in an agricultural job or in full scale production somewhere, they are learning the very skills we are promoting at the State Department of Agriculture for economic development and entrepreneurship.

Now the resources we've been building at ISDA will be at your fingertips as well.

As you know agriculture doesn't mean just farming anymore – although our farmers and producers are still the backbone of the industry. But today's modern agricultural industry is diverse and full of opportunities for young people – from law to education, biochemistry to business – FFA is preparing you to be leaders in those fields.

You are the future of agriculture and we want you to have every advantage. We've never lived in a time when so many depend on so few for their quality of life. That presents agriculture with huge responsibilities and challenges to conquer. And you are the next wave of leaders who will deal with those issues head on.

I would wager that there are a fair number of natural born leaders in this crowd – people who have a vision for the future, and the ability to lay out a plan to get there. In fact, our Joe Kelsay, the Director at ISDA is a former FFA officer.

Leadership is simple when it's boiled down...it's knowing where you're going and how you're going to get there. And then taking action.

That's what this new partnership between FFA and ISDA is all about – action and leadership.

I hope you've enjoyed this year's convention. I know you're excited about what's coming next in your life's journey. And we are excited in state government about the work we're going to be doing together.

Thanks so much for all you do and thanks for having me here today.